

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER X. A PAINFUL PART.

"MOTHER, you're not as happy here now as you would be in a little house of your own, are you?" Jenifer said, coming in and casting her arms round her mother's neck that night as soon as she could escape after dinner.

"Happy! That I can never be anywhere again, Jenny; my day is done."

"No, no, you sha'n't say such things—such futile, untrue things. Mother darling, you're our own mother still, and you have your work to do for us though we have disappointed you," Jenifer cried out, weeping as bitterly as if she and not Jack had married beneath her, and degraded the family.

"Jenifer," Mrs. Ray said solemnly, "what does this mean—that you're going to marry, and offer me a home with you and your husband? Jenny, I won't have you throw yourself away for my sake! I want but little here below, and shall not want that little long. You shall not sacrifice yourself to Mr. Boldero, good, excellent man as he is, for my sake."

"Mother!" Jenifer cried out, "are we all going mad because of this trouble about Jack? Mr. Boldero! I should as soon have thought of you as of him. Why, mother, he's not 'a good, excellent man' only in my eyes, he's ever so much more and more like what a man ought to be than—than any other man I know. He would as soon think of the harness-house cat for a wife as he would think of me; don't speak of him in that way to me. I can't bear it."

Old Mrs. Ray thought very desperately for several minutes. In her pocket she

had a letter from this Mr. Boldero, asking her consent to his wooing her daughter. The letter had reached her just an hour or two ago, just an hour before Jack had come to her with his bitter confession. And she had put it aside as unimportant—as comparatively unimportant, at least, because her heart and mind were full of the imminent peril of her son Jack.

But now she was compelled to think of it.

"Jenny, my child," she began very gently, "forgive my forgetfulness of you. Something that concerns you nearly and dearly has come to my knowledge to-day, but with the thought of this disgrace which Jack has brought upon us hanging over me, I could think of nothing, say nothing; but now I will tell you," and with this she fumbled in her pocket, and brought Mr. Boldero's letter out of it.

Jenny read it, and understood it at once. There it was, an offer, a plain and distinct offer of marriage from the most honourable and fastidious gentleman whom it had ever been her lot to meet.

And this offer of marriage was made to her, Jenifer Ray, a girl who was just disgraced by the folly of her brother—a folly of which Mr. Boldero knew nothing, of which he would take no cognisance; but which would bitterly aggrieve and disgust him when he came to know it.

"He shall never smart through me; he's as the stars above me," the girl said to herself in the one brief minute in which she held the letter in her hand, trying to read it, and failing by reason of the tears of pity for herself that were half blinding her. And this not because of any strong sentiment of love for Mr. Boldero, for, in these days of which I am writing, Jenifer Ray had hold of her own heart still. And though she thought of Mr. Boldero as of a

man whom any woman might love, she did not know that she loved him herself.

On the contrary she rather inclined to think that there was something about Captain Edgcomb's demeanour towards her which merited considerable consideration from her. He liked her; of that she was sure. He attracted her by the manner in which he showed his liking. And it may be presumed that she did not regard him as a star above her, for she did not feel that if she finally married him he would be in any way disgraced by Jack's misalliance.

So after holding his letter in her hand for a minute after she had read it, she handed it back to her mother with these words:

"It's one of the things that might have been, if everything had been different, mother; as it is— Well, I wish with all my heart that Mr. Boldero had never thought of me in that way."

"If you could bring yourself to think of him; he is older than you are, I admit, but—"

"Mother, don't, don't speak of him in that way; it's not that he is 'older' than I am that I—I want you to give him back his letter and say 'No' for me to his offer. I could have adored him," the girl continued impulsively, "but he has been prudent about his course concerning my brothers, and I'm afraid of him."

"If you were his wife you'd have no cause to fear anything that your brothers may do, or have done," old Mrs. Ray went on, as eagerly as if she had not been perfectly indifferent to the prospect of Jenifer's marrying Mr. Boldero a few minutes before. In fact it was balm in Gilead to her to feel that if her dearly-loved, cherished, tenderly cared-for daughter willed, she, Jenifer, at least would be out of reach of all the evil consequences, the bitternesses, the sordid considerations, and many mortifications which might accrue from Jack's miserable marriage.

"I won't marry any man in order to escape my share of a family trouble, mother dear," Jenifer said stoutly.

And on this her mother pleaded Mr. Boldero's case over again, not bringing any fresh arguments to bear on the subject; but urging the girl to accept the offer as a happy and safe release from all the home dangers and difficulties.

And at last her arguments prevailed to a certain extent. At last Jenifer began to remind herself that not only would she herself be lifted out of the domestic mire

which was stifling them now, but that her mother also would be once more honourably placed, and treated with the deference and consideration that were her due. It was galling to the girl to a horrible degree to see her mother set aside as she had been during these latter days at Moor Royal. And Jenifer's prophetic soul told her that this would grow. Effie was not likely to grow less selfish, or extravagant, or contemptuously indifferent to everything that did not conduce to her own pleasure or aggrandisement. Hubert was not likely to become less yielding to his wife's lightest whim. Altogether the outlook for the widow and her daughter, if they remained at Moor Royal, was a deplorable one, a desperately ignominious and distressing one. It did move Jenifer strongly this reflection that if she accepted Mr. Boldero's offer, the outlook for her mother in his house would be as bright as this one at Moor Royal was dark. Moreover she did like and admire the man who could release her mother and herself from the bondage of life in Effie's house. She did like him better than any other man she knew, excepting, perhaps, Captain Edgcomb, and him she liked in quite a different way—as a fascinating, amusing, distinctly agreeable and accomplished society man. At this juncture she had no romantic or impassioned feeling about either of them. But she knew that Mr. Boldero would become very dear and very essential to her if she saw much more of him, and she believed that, if she became Mrs. Boldero, she would be one of the happiest women, one of the most loved and loving wives in the world.

All these considerations weighed the balance heavily in favour of her accepting him. But in the other scale she put the shame and disgrace of Jack's marriage. Had she any right to act for her own happiness, and by so acting to link a man whose name was held in such high account by all men with this shame and disgrace? At any rate she would not accept the offer which Mr. Boldero had made in ignorance of Jack's culminating folly, till she had given him an opportunity of retracting it. He must have gone straight home from the "meet," and written to her mother with the memory of the unavailing prayer she had made to him for her brother fresh in his mind. When he knew how fully all her worst fears for Jack were realised, would he still want her to be his wife?

"I ought to have shown it to you when I got it first, Jenny, but Jack's wicked folly had put everything else out of my head. Now, whatever your answer is going to be, it ought to go to him to-night, and I am afraid there is not another post," old Mrs. Ray said dejectedly, for she dreaded anything like delay now that Jenifer seemed half disposed to act wisely.

"Your letter can't go till to-morrow now," Jenifer gasped with a sense of relief. "I shall have time to think and to pray, and to-morrow, whatever I have been taught to know is best, you shall write to Mr. Boldero. But at the same time you must tell him all there is to tell about Jack."

"Yes, indeed, we'll do nothing underhand, hard as it will be for me to tell his father's friend that my son has married the daughter of one of his father's servants."

"We must help Jack never to think of her now in that way," Jenifer said resolutely in answer to the piteous bitterness which made itself manifest both in her mother's words and tones. "She's his wife now. While we only feared she might become his wife it was different, but now——"

"May I come in?" Jack's voice, broken by sobs, asked at the door.

"Oh, not to-night—not to-night!" poor old Mrs. Ray whispered. "Jenny, tell him. It would kill me to see him to-night—my own boy! And to think of his going away from me to such a wife!"

So Jenifer went out, and with her arms round poor, unhappy, miserably awakened Jack's neck, broke his mother's decision to him as gently as she could.

"Be strong, and bear your punishment like a man, Jack," she murmured. "In time we shall all be happy again, please God. Meantime don't get to think hardly of our mother even if she does seem a little hard to you now; it has come upon her so suddenly."

"You never gave her a hint then? Jenny, you are a brick! Oh, that I'd listened to—— I mean you won't desert me altogether, will you? Hubert and his wife will treat me like a pariah now, though Mrs. Effie was always leading me on to think more and more of Minnie's good looks. There, I'll say no more. I'm a coward and a cur to try and cast the blame, or the responsibility rather, of my choice on anyone else. Good-night,

Jenny dear; this house will never see me again, I suppose."

It was a sad going away from the old home for the poor misguided boy, whose own wilful infatuation had marred his prospects in life. His mother lifted up her voice and wept, as she listened to his receding footsteps along the corridor. But she would not recall him to say one pitying tender word. The thought of the disgrace and sorrow he had brought upon them all was too new to her for her to take him back to her heart, though her heart was bleeding for him.

"Well, Jenny, this is a pretty business of Master Jack's! 'Pon my word, I think I shall sell the place, and get away beyond the reach of the rumour of it," Hubert said impatiently when Jenifer went back to the drawing-room to say good-night.

"Running away from the rumour won't do any good to either you or Jack," Jenifer said curtly, for Hubert's absorbing selfishness jarred harshly on her this night.

"It's just like the charitable Jenifer to uphold evil-doers," Mrs. Ray said with her faintest smiling sneer. "Now I can't pretend to want to do good to Jack or to wish to see anyone else do good to him; he has behaved like a fool, and I hope he'll have the fool's reward. But I do like to see good done to myself, and the best good Hubert can do me is to take me away out of reach of ever hearing anything of his extremely obnoxious brother and sister-in-law. To do that he must sell Moor Royal, and so I hope Moor Royal will come to the hammer without delay."

"Hubert, you won't?" Jenifer cried.

"When a fellow's worried as I have been to-night he hardly knows what he'll do," Mr. Ray replied.

"Moor Royal has been ours for so many generations," Jenifer said sorrowfully.

"I don't feel inclined to have my health and spirits sacrificed for any sickly family feeling," Effie cried buoyantly. "I mean my life to be as bright as society and money can make it, and neither will do much to brighten it down here now that Jack has degraded us as he has. So Moor Royal will go as soon as a purchaser can be found for it, and in the meantime, Hugh, I shall go and stay with Flora."

Then they went on discussing their plans of pleasure, and speaking of possible purchasers of the property, as unconcerned as if Jenifer had not been present.

"I'll marry Mr. Boldero, and put mother on a throne again, and love him better than a man was ever loved before for enabling me to do it," the daughter thought with a swelling heart as she went back to her mother's room.

The following day, long before Mr. Boldero received an answer from his letter to old Mrs. Ray, he had a visit from Hubert Ray.

Briefly, and not at all bitterly, the elder brother told the tale of the younger one's delinquencies to the family lawyer. Then he added:

"This crowning act of idiocy on Jack's part has naturally upset my wife terribly."

"How about your mother and sister?" Mr. Boldero interposed quickly.

"Oh, my mother is a good deal cut up, of course, partly because Jack was always her pet, and partly because it may affect Jenifer's prospects of marriage. Now I don't distress myself about that for a moment, because I happen to know that Edgecumb will marry her to-morrow if she'll have him, and Effie and I both think she is ready to do so."

Mr. Boldero rang for coals, and when the little interruption caused by their being put on the fire was over, it was he who took up the ball of conversation.

"Jack has had plenty of advice against this crowning act of madness. I know his sister stood like an angel of mercy in his path, and warned him against following. And Mrs. Ray and you can't have been ignorant of his being in jeopardy. You have surely tried to save your brother?"

"To tell the truth," Hubert said in some embarrassment, "my wife always urged me to let Jack alone. She had an idea he was so pig-headed that opposition would only urge him on. Poor girl! she would have done anything to stop it—anything. In fact she's so distressed about it, that nothing will induce her to live at Moor Royal any longer. She couldn't have any of her own people down to stay with her after this; she's awfully sensitive, in fact, and I may as well tell you at once, that I've come to speak to you about selling Moor Royal."

"There's one clause in your father's will which you seem to have forgotten, and that is, that for three years after coming into possession of the property you are bound to reside at Moor Royal. You can neither let or sell it."

"I wish to Heaven the three years were

up then," Hubert exclaimed angrily. "Why in the world did my father treat me as if I had been a capricious boy, instead of a man well able to look after my own interests? It may ruin my domestic happiness now if I am not able to take my wife away from Moor Royal."

"Not if she's a sensible woman, Hubert, and I should think that she is that," Mr. Boldero said outspokenly, but there was not that amount of blind confidence in Effie's discretion which her husband liked to see displayed.

"Sensible! I should rather say she was sensible, but she's also very determined; she's made up her mind to get away from Moor Royal at once, and if I can't sell or let till the three years are up, it means an expensive round of visits, that's all, and at the end of the three years the sale of the property. There'll be nothing to hinder me then."

"Your father always had a dread of your parting with the old place."

"Meantime, as I can't sell it, I'll cut down timber," Hubert said recklessly. "It's all very well, Boldero, but a man ought not to be hampered and fettered by another man's whim. The sale of Moor Royal would be the making of me, and by Jove! it shall be sold the day the three years are up."

"You forget that your father's latest wishes are still unknown to you," Mr. Boldero reminded his client.

"Ah, the sealed letter which you hold! They can be of no importance, they can only concern trifles compared to the Moor Royal property, and that's indisputably mine."

"And yours may it always remain is the sincere wish of my heart," Mr. Boldero said heartily, as his guest got up to go.

"Can't echo the sentiment, my dear sir," Mr. Ray laughed; "if you had a wife, and she hated her home, you'd be very glad to get her away from it; but I'm thwarted by a mere caprice in doing this, and as I said just now, my domestic happiness may suffer from it."

His guest departed, and Mr. Boldero sat alone thinking mournfully that all the sorrowful prognostications about his two sons which had darkened the squire's last days, were being fast fulfilled.

"He always had the notion that Hubert would wreck his bark against the rock of extravagance, and that Jack would fall into low company and dissipated ways through his over-weening fondness for

sport; yet his love for Moor Royal was so much stronger than his love for anything else on earth, that he has protected it as jealously as if it had been a cherished child. And through no act or deed of hers, and without my aid, Jenifer will be a rich woman, and able to endow this man Edgcomb, whom she loves, with as good a property as there is in the neighbourhood."

Then he went on to accuse himself of having indulged in self-confident vanity in having supposed for an hour that fair young Jenifer Ray might have preferred him, the sober middle-aged lawyer, to the handsome young soldier, who (according to her brother Hubert) was her heart's real choice.

He felt manfully and generously that as things were going now, and with his knowledge of how these things would act and re-act upon the futures of Jenifer and her brothers, he could resign all thoughts of her far more readily than he could have done had she been likely to remain dependent Jenifer Ray at Moor Royal, dependent on the capricious bounty of her sister-in-law. Had this latter been the only fate before her, he would have used his utmost eloquence, and brought his most urgent claims to bear upon her, convinced as he was that he had the power in him to make her a happy and contented woman. But now—now it would be well for him to resign her to what she would think the brighter fate, if she loved Edgcomb.

The three years would soon pass away, and the contents of the sealed letter would be made known to Hubert Ray and whomsoever else it concerned.

And then? Why then possibly Jenifer would be another man's happy wife, and it would never be known what fortune, hope, and love the family-lawyer had let slide through his grasp in renouncing her as he meant to renounce her now, even if she thought herself able and willing to complete the sacrifice he had proposed to her mother the previous day.

No one else should know of his offer with the exception of her mother, to whom he had made it, of that he was resolved. Not that he was one of those poor creatures who are ashamed to have it known that they have wanted women for their wives who have not become such, but because he would not have it known that whatever fortune might fall to Jenifer in the future he might have had a share in. To proclaim, or in any way to consent to the

advertisement of his own magnanimity was not a custom of his. So now, though all the love of his heart was given to Jenifer Ray, and he had never desired anything so ardently in his life, as he did now desire to marry her, he determined that he would refuse her acceptance should she accept him, and that no one should ever know that he might have had her and hers.

Old Mrs. Ray's letter reached him in due time. Jenifer was grateful and honoured—this last word was old Mrs. Ray's interpolation, and had not been dictated by Jenifer—but before she could answer him she must see him and tell him something that had happened which might alter his views materially. Would he, therefore, come to Moor Royal that afternoon at four o'clock. He rode up to Moor Royal, knowing that before he left it he would have flung away his heart's best hopes and happiness.

His knowledge of the contents of that sealed letter was costing him dear indeed.

BENVENUTO CELLINI.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

NATURALLY, after Cellini's release from prison, his first works were for his patron the cardinal, until the time came for the latter to return to France, and then they all set out together. After the usual quarrelling, which was unavoidable wherever Cellini was concerned, they reached Florence, and then Ferrara, where the artist abode for some time, doing work for the duke of that place, until the French king began to grumble at his non-appearance, and he pursued his journey, leaving, of course, behind him, the memory of divers quarrels.

At length he did reach Fontainebleau, and had an audience with the king, who gave him a most gracious reception; but when it came to a question of setting to work, and the settlement of a salary, Cellini would not accept the terms of his benefactor, the cardinal, but broke up his establishment, and started on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Messengers were despatched after him, overtook him, and brought him back, owing to their using threats of imprisonment, of which he had had quite enough to last him his life, and which was the most potent argument that could possibly be employed in his case. The question of emolument was soon settled; he was to have the same salary as Francis had

assigned to Leonardo da Vinci (seven hundred crowns annually); to be paid, besides, for all work done for the king, and to receive a present of five hundred crowns to defray the expense of his journey.

His first commission from the king was a magnificent one, but from its vast scale it could scarcely be carried out by an artist who was then forty years of age. It was no less than to make twelve candlesticks in silver, the height of Francis himself, of six gods and six goddesses, and the artist was assigned the Tour de Nesle as a residence.

Cellini at once set to work on his models, and arranged about the payment of his two assistants, but he could not get possession of his residence. It had been assigned previously to the provost of Paris, Jean d'Estourville, who, however, made no use of it, and would not allow Cellini to occupy it, in spite of repeated orders. So Benvenuto complained to the king, who abruptly asked him, "Who he was, and what was his name?" Surprised at this reception, he did not at first reply, but afterwards stammered out that his name was Cellini; on which the king told him that if he was the same Cellini who had been described to him, he had better act like himself, he had the king's free permission. On this hint he set to work, and very soon was in residence at his new abode.

He then made full-sized models of Jupiter, Vulcan, and Mars, and got three hundred pounds of silver wherewith to commence his work. Meantime he finished a silver-gilt cup and basin—which he had begun for the Cardinal of Ferrara immediately on his release from prison—and they were of such beautiful workmanship, that, as soon as he had given them to his patron, the latter presented them to Francis, who in return gave the cardinal an abbey worth seven thousand crowns a year. The king, besides, wanted to make the artist a handsome present, but the cardinal prevented him, saying he would settle a pension of at least three hundred crowns yearly on him, out of the proceeds of his abbey; but this he never did.

Cellini was now in great favour; he really worked hard, and his Jupiter and other gods progressed rapidly. The king took a personal interest in them, visiting the artist's atelier, and gave him an order to make a gold salt-cellar, as companion to his cup and basin. He had a model ready—one he had made in Rome at the request

of the Cardinal of Ferrara—and with this the king was so highly delighted, that he ordered his treasurer to give Benvenuto one thousand old gold crowns, good weight, to be used in its manufacture. He duly received them, but he says that the treasurer, on one pretence or other, delayed payment till night, and then instigated four bravos to rob him. It is needless to say that such odds were nothing to Cellini, and that he reached home in safety with his precious burden.

The king, indeed, seemed unable to show sufficiently his regard for the artist. He gave him letters of naturalisation, and made him Lord of the Tour de Nesle. He visited him in company with Madame d'Estampes, and it was at her instigation that Cellini received orders to do something wherewith to ornament and beautify Fontainebleau. For this he designed some magnificent gates, but he made an enemy of the favourite through not consulting her in the matter. He endeavoured to mollify her by presenting her with a beautiful cup, but she would not see him, so he went off in a tiff, and gave the cup to the Cardinal of Lorraine—which, of course, further embittered his fair enemy. To make matters worse, he turned out, neck and crop, a man who had taken up his residence, without permission, in a portion of the Tour de Nesle, and who happened to be a protégé of madame's. This, of course, was never forgiven, and it was war to the knife on the lady's part.

She set up a rival artist in opposition, Primaticcio; was always dinning in the king's ears, day and night, his superiority over Cellini, and succeeded, at last, in persuading Francis to let Primaticcio execute Cellini's designs for the gates at Fontainebleau. Cellini heard of this, and at once called on his rival; and having tried, without effect, moral suasion, to induce him to relinquish his proposed task, threatened to kill him, as he would a mad dog, when and wherever he met him. This course of reasoning succeeded where gentle means failed, and Primaticcio begged rather to be considered in the light of a brother.

Meanwhile he was hard at work on the king's salt-cellar, and when his majesty returned to Paris, he presented it. As it was of remarkable workmanship, a detailed account of it will be interesting. It was of pure gold, and represented the earth and the sea, the latter being a figure of Neptune, holding a trident in one hand, and in the other a

ship, which was to hold the salt. Under this were four sea-horses with their tails interlaced, besides a variety of fishes and other marine animals, whilst the water, with its undulating waves, was enamelled green. The earth was a beautiful nude female figure, holding a cornucopia in her right hand, whilst in her left she carried an Ionic temple, which served as a pepper-box. Under her were terrestrial animals and rocks partly enamelled, and partly natural gold. This was fixed on a base of black ebony, on which were four figures in mezzo-relievo of day and night, and of morning and evening. It is needless to say that Francis was delighted with it, and Primaticcio slunk off to Rome, under the pretext of studying the Laocoon, and other ancient works of art there.

Cellini was now forty-three years of age, and in the zenith of his fame and working powers. He enjoyed the favour of Francis to an extraordinary extent, and the king, on his visits to the artist's studio, was astounded at the magnitude of his conceptions, and the excellence of his execution. On one occasion he ordered seven thousand gold crowns to be paid him, but the Cardinal of Ferrara prevented its payment, and satisfied the king with his reason for so doing, that if Benvenuto was made rich, he would probably buy an estate in Italy, and would leave whenever the whim seized him. Possibly the same reasoning prevailed when, a short time afterwards, Francis promised him the first vacant abbey whose revenue should amount to two thousand crowns a year—but Cellini never received it.

Madame d'Estampes's hostility, however, was not yet allayed, for, as she observed, "I govern the whole kingdom, and yet such an insignificant fellow sets my power at defiance;" so she persuaded the king to grant to a perfumer, one of her creatures, the tennis-court of the Tour de Nesle. He took possession in spite of protest; but Cellini so harassed him by assaults every day with stones, pikes, and muskets (firing only blank cartridge), that no one dared stir from the place. This method was too slow, and one day our hero stormed the place, drove out the interloper, and threw his goods out of window. He then went straight to the king, told his story, was laughed at, forgiven, and had fresh letters given him, securing him still more in his possession.

For this the king was amply repaid by the strenuous exertions of the artist,

and the Jupiter, the first and only one of that nobly-devised set of candelabra, was finished; and in spite of Madame d'Estampes's intrigues, was shown to Francis at its best advantage. He was in raptures with it, and talked largely of rewarding its creator, but nothing came of it but one thousand crowns, which were partly for previous disbursements.

War broke out between Francis and the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and the king not only consulted Cellini as to the defences of Paris, but gave him a commission to do all he thought necessary to ensure the city's safety, but he resigned his task, when his old foe, Madame d'Estampes, prevailed on the king to send for Girolamo Bellarmati. Her enmity still pursued Benvenuto, and she so worked upon the king that one day he swore he would never show the artist any more favour. An officious friend carried this speech to Cellini, and he instantly formed a resolution to quit the kingdom. Before he could do so, however, he had many alternate hopes and fears. Sometimes Francis would load him with praises, at another he would scold and reprimand him severely, and it was, at last, only through the instrumentality of his old friend, the Cardinal of Ferrara, that he at length succeeded in quitting Paris. His departure, though nominally a pleasure-trip, in order to visit his sister and her daughters, was, in reality, a flight; for he left his furniture and other goods behind him, to the value of fifteen thousand crowns. He endeavoured to carry away with him two magnificent silver vases, but he was pursued and compelled to surrender them.

He seems to have had, for him, a quiet and peaceable journey, the only excitement he records being a terrific hailstorm, the hailstones beginning of the size of ounce bullets, and ending by being as big as lemons; nay, afterwards they found some which a man could hardly grasp in his two hands.

However, his party suffered no harm with the exception of some bruises; which under the circumstances was not to be wondered at; but, as they journeyed onwards, they found the trees all broken down, and all the cattle, with many shepherds, killed. They reached Florence without further mishap, and there Cellini found his sister and her six daughters all well.

Cosmo de' Medici, the Duke of Tuscany, received him with the greatest kindness; sympathised with him, and promised him

almost unlimited wealth, if he would but work for him, and it was settled that his first task should be a statue, either in marble or bronze, for the square before the ancient palace of the Republic, the Palazzo Vecchio. Cellini was forty-five years old when he made the model of his famous Perseus, which is now at Florence, in the Loggia dei Lanzi.

He settled upon a house, which Cosmo at once purchased and presented to him, but the irritable artist must, of course, at the very outset, quarrel with the duke's servants, and, consequently, some delay occurred before he could begin his model. But everything was at last arranged, even down to his salary, and he entered formally into the Medicean service.

Still, even in his beloved native town he was not happy, for Baccio Bandinelli, the celebrated sculptor, was either jealous of him, or he of Bandinelli, and they were always at feud. He kept good friends with his patron, made a colossal model of his head, executed some jewellery for the duchess, and worked hard at his Perseus; but he was always at daggers drawn with some of the ducal suite, and just now it was with the steward, who, he says, suborned people to charge him with a horrible crime.

There seems to have been no attempt at a prosecution; but Cellini felt it decidedly advisable to quit Florence for some time. So next morning he departed, without telling anyone but his sister, and went towards Venice. From Ferrara he wrote to the duke, saying that though he had left Florence without taking leave of him, he would return without being sent for. At Venice, he visited both Titian and Sansovino, and also Lorenzo de' Medici, who earnestly advised him to return to France, instead of going back to Florence. But Cellini, having written the duke his version of the cause which drove him from his native place, and judging that the outcry against him had somewhat subsided, returned as suddenly as he had left, and unceremoniously visited Cosmo, who, although at first he seemed displeased, soon entered into good-humoured conversation with him, asked about his visit to Venice, and ended by bidding him mind his work, and finish the statue of Perseus.

This statue, or, more properly speaking, group, however, did not progress very rapidly, for Cellini was not liked, and he was thwarted wherever it was practicable, while both the duke and duchess would

fain have kept him at work designing and making jewellery for them; in fact he was obliged to bribe the duchess with little presents of vases, etc., to try and gain her influence to obtain more help on his great work, and especially to counteract the machinations of his arch-enemy, Bandinelli.

It was of small avail, for the duke, displeased with the slow progress of the work, had, some eighteen months since, stopped supplying money, and Cellini had to find his men's wages out of his own pocket. So, by way of consolation, he thought he would murder Bandinelli; but when he met him, other ideas prevailed, and he spurned him, thinking what a much more glorious vengeance it would be to finish his work, and thus confound his enemies, and Bandinelli afterwards offered him a fine block of marble, wherewith to make a statue.

This, however, did not make them friends, for both being once in the duke's presence, Cellini told the duke plainly that Bandinelli was a compound of everything that was bad, and had always been so; and then he went on to criticise most unmercifully his rival's statuary, and to overwhelm it with ridicule. At the same time, however, he made him stick to his promise, and insisted on the delivery of the block of marble, out of which he carved a group of Apollo and Hyacinthus.

This delighted the duke, and he begged him to leave the Perseus for a while, and devote himself to sculpture; and Benvenuto did so, carving a Narcissus out of a block of Greek marble.

The duke had some doubts as to Cellini's ability to cast a large statue in bronze, but the artist assured him of his powers, promising that it should be perfect in every respect except one foot, which he averred could not be cast well, and would require to be replaced by a new one.

The casting was a series of accidents. His shop took fire, and it was feared the roof would fall in; then from another side came such a tempest of rain and wind, that it cooled the furnace. Add to all this, that Cellini was taken suddenly ill of a violent intermittent fever, and every one will perceive that things were almost as bad as they could be.

Ill in bed, news came to him that his work was spoilt, so he got up and went to the workshop, where he found the metal cooled, owing to deficient firing. This he at once remedied, and, with the addition of

some pewter, the metal soon began to melt.

Hark ! a loud report, a blinding glare of light, and when men had come to their senses, they found that the cover of the furnace had burst and flown off, so that the bronze began to run. Quick ! tap the metal ; but it does not flow very quickly, it must be made more fluid. A number of pewter platters and dishes were procured, and into the furnace they went, some two hundred of them. Then the metal ran kindly, and the mould was filled, and nothing more could be done but wait with patience for its cooling.

The mental strain relieved, Benvenuto returned thanks to Heaven for the successful issue, then forgot all about his fever, and found he had a great appetite ; so he sat down with his workmen and enjoyed his meal, drank "success to the casting," and then to bed, to arise quite cured, and capable of eating a capon for his dinner.

Two days afterwards came another anxious time. Had the casting been successful ? Piece by piece it was uncovered. Yes, all went well until the foot was reached, which was to be imperfect. What a disappointment ! the heel came out fair and round, and all Cellini's learned lecture to the duke went for naught. Yet, still, on uncovering it, came a little cry of joy, for were not the toes wanting, as also part of the foot ? Who now could say he did not thoroughly understand his business ? And so his patron and the duchess fully admitted when they saw the work.

After this a little rest was permissible, and a journey to Rome was the result. Here he saw Michel Angelo, whom he in vain induced to take service with Cosmo de' Medici. But St. Peter's was to be built, and nothing could persuade its creator to leave it. Malice had been busy during Cellini's absence, and on his return he found the duke very cold towards him ; but although he managed to overcome this, an incident was about to happen which was to make the duchess, henceforth, his implacable enemy.

She wanted the duke to buy a string of pearls for her for six thousand crowns, and begged Cellini to praise them to the duke. He did so, and the prince was wavering as to the purchase, when he asked the jeweller's honest opinion of their value. Cellini could not but answer this appeal in a straightforward manner, and replied that they were not worth above two thousand crowns, at the same time pointing out to

the duke how much his consort desired them, and how she had asked him to aid her in obtaining them. So when the duchess once more asked for them, she was refused, and was told that Benvenuto's opinion was that the money would be thrown away. The duchess was but a woman, she gave him one look, shook her head threateningly at him, left the room, and never forgave him. She got her pearls though. A courtier, more supple and pliant than Cellini, begged the duke to buy them for his wife. He chose a happy moment, stood a few blows and cuffs, and then the indulgent husband yielded, and the pearls were his wife's property.

The duchess could not now bear the sight of Cellini, and the breach between them was widened by his refusal to give her, to adorn her room, the figures of Jupiter, Mercury, Minerva, and Danae, which he had made to go with his Perseus. Her influence made itself felt, and even the duke sensibly cooled towards our hero, and at last he found access to the palace very difficult.

But the crowning honour of his life was at hand. His Perseus was to be shown to the people and judged by their verdict. Proud, indeed, must have been the artist when he viewed the crowds which, from before daybreak, poured forth to see and admire his work. There was no adverse criticism there—no petty or factious jealousy. The people heartily and honestly admired the creation of their fellow-citizen, and felt a truly fraternal pride in owning him as one of themselves. The duke himself, concealed at a window, listened to the remarks of his people, and was so pleased, that he sent his favourite, Sforza, to congratulate Benvenuto, and tell him that he meant to signally reward him. His pride must have been gratified to the very utmost. "During the whole day the people showed me to each other as a sort of prodigy," and two gentlemen, who were envoys from the Viceroy of Sicily, made him most liberal offers, on behalf of their prince, if only he would go with them. Verses, Latin odes, and Greek poems were written by the hundred, and all, with any literary pretensions, vied with each other in producing some eulogium on Cellini.

At length, sated with praise, he longed for a little rest, and obtained leave from his princely patron to make a short pilgrimage to Vallambrosa, Camaldoli, the baths of Santa Maria, and back again. At

the baths he met with an old man, a physician, who was, besides, a student in alchemy. This old man conceived a great friendship for Cellini, and told him that there were mines both of gold and silver in the neighbourhood; and furthermore, gave him a piece of practical information, to the effect that there was a pass, near Camaldoli, so open, that an enemy could not only easily invade the Florentine territory by its means, but also could surprise the castle of Poppi without difficulty. Being furnished by his old friend with a sketch-map he immediately returned to Florence, and lost no time in presenting himself before the duke, and acquainting him with the reason of his speedy return.

The duke was well pleased with this service, and promised, of course, great things; but the favour of princes is proverbially fickle, and when, in the course of a day or two, he sought an interview for the purpose of being rewarded for his Perseus, he was met by a message from the duke, through his secretary, desiring him to name his own price. This roused Cellini's ire, and he refused to put a price upon his work, until, stung by repeated reiterations of the demand, he said that ten thousand crowns was less than it was worth.

Cosmo was evidently a good hand at a bargain, and was quite angry at being asked such a sum, saying that cities, or royal palaces, could be built for such a sum; to which the artist retorted, with his usual modesty, that any number of men could be found capable of building cities and palaces, but not another, in all the world, who could make such a statue of Perseus. His rival, Bandinelli, was called in to appraise it, and, whether he took its real value, or had some doubts of the consequences of the fire-eating Cellini's wrath in the event of his depreciating it, he assessed it at sixteen thousand crowns. This was more than the duke could stand; and, after much haggling, it was settled that the artist should be rewarded with a sum of three thousand five hundred gold crowns, to be paid in monthly sums of one hundred gold crowns. This soon fell to fifty, then to twenty-five, and sometimes was never paid at all, so that Benvenuto, writing in 1566, says there were still five hundred crowns due to him on that account.

Still Cosmo was anxious to keep Cellini at work. He could thoroughly appreciate the artist's efforts, but he

objected to pay the bill. Numerous plans for work were raised, and models made; but they fell through, either through the artist refusing to adorn another's work, or through the prince choosing the worst models. The court, too, was full of intrigues, as the story of a block of marble will show. A fine block, intended for a statue of Neptune, had arrived, and the duchess contrived that Bandinelli should have the promise of it. Of course Cellini could not stand this, so he pleaded his cause with the duke, with the result that it was arranged that he and his rival should send in models, and that the victor in the competition should execute the statue. Benvenuto says he produced the best; but, knowing the court well, he waited on the duchess with a present of some jewellery, and promised, if she would only be neutral in the contest, to make for her the finest work of his life, a life-sized crucified Christ, of the whitest marble, on a cross of pure black. Cellini says Bandinelli died of sheer chagrin; and the duchess declared that as he, if he had lived, should have had the stone, at any rate by his death his rival should not have it, so the marble was given to Bartolommeo Ammanati, who finished the statue in 1563.

The feud between Bandinelli and Cellini rose to such a height as even to interfere with their sepulchral arrangements. The latter in disgust with the duchess had promised his Christ to the church of Santa Maria Novella, provided the monks would give him the ground under it, on which to erect his tomb. They said they had no power to grant his request, so, in a pet, he offered it on the same terms to the church of the Santissima Annunziata, and it was eagerly accepted. But Bandinelli had nearly finished a "Pietà," our Lord supported by Nicodemus—a portrait of himself, and he went straight to the duchess and begged the chapel for his own tomb. By her influence, with some difficulty, he obtained his wish, and there he erected an altar-tomb, which is still in existence; and having, when it was finished, removed thither his father's remains, he was taken suddenly ill, as aforesaid, and died within eight days.

The next noteworthy incident in Cellini's chequered career was that he bought a farm near Vicchio, about seven miles from Florence, for the term of his natural life (in other words, an annuity), of one Piermaria Sbietta. He paid his property a visit, and was received with every demonstration of

affection by Sbietta, his wife, and his brother Filippo, a profligate priest. Several persons warned him of impending danger from one or other of them, but their kindness seems to have disarmed his suspicions, and he stayed to supper, intending to sleep at Trespiano that night. When he resumed his journey, however, he was taken violently ill with burning pains in the region of his stomach, and next morning felt as if on fire. Then he concluded that he had been poisoned, and, after passing in review the things of which he had partaken at supper, he felt convinced that corrosive sublimate had been administered to him in some very highly seasoned but palatable sauce, which he had so much relished that he had been helped to two spoonfuls. At Cellini's age—he was then sixty—this proved nearly fatal, especially as the physicians of that day were profoundly ignorant. He hovered between life and death for six months, and did not thoroughly recover and attend once more to his business for a whole year.

His illness was productive of another event in his life, for, whilst lying sick, he made a vow, should he recover, to marry a woman who had nursed him with great care. He fulfilled his vow, and by his wife, Madonna Piera, he had five children.

When able again to work, he sought the duke, who was at Leghorn, was kindly received, told to return to Florence, and occupation should be found for him. But this does not seem to be the case, so he completely finished the marble crucifix, which he intended for his tomb, and showed it to the duke and duchess, both of whom were highly delighted with it. Cosmo hankered after it, and ultimately obtained it, in 1565, for fifteen hundred crowns, when he had it removed and placed in the Palazzo Pitti. In 1577 it was sent as a present to Philip the Second of Spain, who had it carried on men's shoulders from Barcelona, and deposited in the Coro Alto of the Escorial, where it may now be seen, inscribed: "Benventus Zelinus, Civis Florent: facie bat 1562."

Not being fully employed he got fidgety, and a friend of his, Signor Baccio del Bene, having arrived in Florence on a mission from Catherine de' Medici, they had a conversation, in which it was mentioned that the queen dowager wanted to finish the sepulchral monument of her deceased husband, Henry the Second, and that Daniello Ricciarelli da Volterra, who had

the work in hand, was too old to execute it properly, so that there was an excellent opportunity for Cellini to return to France, and once more take possession of his Tour de Nesle.

He asked Baccio to mention this to the duke, as, personally, he was willing to go, but the duke would not listen to Benvenuto going away, and selfishly kept him, without giving him employment—at least as far as we know, for here Cellini's autobiography ends, in the year 1562.

In 1561, however, Cosmo presented him with a house near San Croce, in the Via Rosajo, for him and his legitimate heirs male for ever, and in the grant, which is very flattering, is the following: "Possessing the house and its appurtenances, with a garden for his own use, we expect the return for the favours shown him will appear in those masterpieces of art, both of casts and sculpture, which may entitle him to our further regard."

Very little is further known about him, but we know that on the 16th of March, 1563 he was deputed, together with Bartolommeo Ammanati, to attend the funeral of his old friend and master, Michel Angelo Buonarroti.

On the 15th of February, 1570, Cellini himself died, and was buried with great pomp in the chapter-house of the Santissima Annunziata, in the presence of the whole academy.

Vasari painted his portrait, in which he is represented with his back towards the spectator, whom he regards, with his beard on his shoulder. It is the face of a man of middle age, with features of no remarkable cast, short curling hair, and crisp beard, the moustache slightly upturned, bushy eyebrows, and two warts on the right side of his nose.

AT EVENTIDE.

STRETCH out thine hand to me across the waste;
Ah, dear lost friend, see how between us rolls
An arid plain, where wander weeping souls,
That seek for all the shadows they have chased,
While sadly wandering, torn by dreads and fears,
Amid the mazes of life's weary years.

Stretch out thine hand, nor heed all that which lies
Between my living form and thy dead heart.
Help me to play alone my listless part,
Wherein I see naught of those clear bright skies
We watched together, standing hand in hand,
To see the sunset deck the darkling land.

That time has come again. I stand alone.
The hills no more may glad my waking sight.
Save when between the darkness and the light,
I close mine eyes and think; then each grey stone,
Each gentle hollow, each fair light and shade
Are mine, imprinted where time cannot fade.

Then why not come and sit beside the fire,
Make thyself known! I would not ask for more,
Would not e'en question of that darksome shore,
Where I have lost thee, nor would I aspire
To gaze within thine eyes. Let me but clasp
Thine hand in mine! I could not fear thy grasp.

Dear, thou art dead, yet wilt though not return?
I do not fear thee, for I know thou'rt dead.
Canst thou not feel this? Leave thy quiet bed,
And watch with me the drift-wood redly burn,
Just as thou didst of old. 'Tis eventide,
What keeps thee from thy old friend's fireside?

I will not question more; methinks thou'rt here,
Yearning to whisper of thy presence sweet.
I will be still, perchance I'll hear thy feet
Pause at my threshold, or thy whisper near.
I will be still, for death is dumb, is dumb!
Thou canst not speak, so I will feel thee come.

ALONG THE SILVER STREAK.

PART III.

IF fortune, as the saying goes, sometimes comes to people while they sleep, she is pretty sure to make off again without taking the trouble to wake them. Thus I felt it to be, anyhow, when on returning to our hotel after our interview with the magistrate, we found that, although the Sea Mew had sailed the night before, yet that Hilda and her father had not gone with her, but had actually slept in the same hotel for the night, and had started this morning in a chaise and pair for parts unknown.

It was provoking to think that I had again missed the opportunity of seeing Hilda, and of making myself known to her. It was provoking, too, to find that both Hilda and the squire had heard of our little adventure of the night before, and had remained to hear the result, driving away as soon as we had been released from arrest.

Hilda had written one of her pithy little notes to Tom, congratulating him on getting out of his scrape, and bidding him beware of making friends with people of whose antecedents he knew nothing. As for her father and herself, they were about to visit an old friend of the squire's, who was believed to be living in the neighbourhood. But as their route was uncertain there was no use in following them. Tom and his friend had better rejoin the Sea Mew as soon as possible, and try and keep out of mischief. There was something gravely sarcastic about the note that sounded to me like an implied reproach. Was it possible that Hilda had after all recognised me, and had seen through the thin disguise and half despised me for having assumed it? All the more I was resolved to follow them,

and have a thorough explanation with Hilda; and the slight obscurity that veiled their movements only made me more eager to find them.

This obscurity was presently somewhat relieved by the return of the carriage which had taken them away, for the driver reported that he had taken them to a place about seven leagues from here, where our friends had hired another conveyance. And so having no seven-league boots, we ordered a carriage to be brought round, secure of the first stage in our journey.

But before the carriage could be brought round a voiture appeared, driven at a splitting pace from the station, in which voiture there sat a little man in spectacles, with a short black beard and vivacious features; though he hardly so much sat either as stood, jumped, danced, gesticulated; everybody flying about at his word as if he were the commander of the port. At last, as if his mainspring had suddenly broken, he sank down upon the cushions with a gesture of despair; and then we saw for the first time that he had a companion in the carriage, a very pretty woman in a pretty costume, arranged with blue serge and blue and white braid to represent approximately a seafaring dress. And then before we quite understood what was the matter, we were somehow dragged into the business by a chain of eager boatmen and touts who exclaimed in a chorus of shouts and cries: "This way, Monsieur le Directeur, this way; behold those two messieurs there who know all about your affair."

"But she has gone, she has sailed!" repeated Monsieur le Directeur, folding his arms gloomily. "All is finished! My friend," addressing the cab-driver, "let us return to Paris."

"But no!" cried Madame la Directrice, rousing herself in turn. "But no, Alphonse, how absurd thou art. Return to Paris! And what shall I wear when I get back to Paris, when I am here completely equipped for the sea. Let us address ourselves to these messieurs." And she bestowed such an engaging smile upon Tom Courtney that his susceptible heart was won in a moment. "We are looking for the Sea Mew," she said, addressing us in excellent English, "a vessel that belongs to the friend of my husband, the distinguished Meesta Chancellor."

"And so are we," replied Tom in his most dulcet accents. "We, too, belong to

the Sea Mew, and I hope we shall be *compagnons de voyage*."

Madame bowed gracefully, and hoped so too, explaining the matter to her husband, who suddenly became radiant again.

"Ha, ha!" cried the director, "here is our affair then well arranged. Messieurs, I have left my bureau of Public Instruction, at the earnest request of my very good friend Chancelleur, that I may make your voyage entertaining, and also, let us hope, a little instructive. Well, I have my programme perfectly arranged, and it was irritating to find it in danger of being rudely cut in two. But since you, messieurs, are here to receive us, all is well, very well. We shall begin at once, having breakfasted. Cherbourg need not long detain us, its history is written in blue books and the budget of the State. But we have a district close by, intensely interesting to all you English who are a little akin to the Normans. You, perhaps," addressing Courtney, "you, perhaps, are a little Norman. Your name, monsieur, which I did not distinctly catch? Courtney!" triumphantly. "See, precisely what I said—Courtnez, short nose, just as we have Courthose, or short pantalon."

"Mon cher," remonstrated madame, frowning at him, "do not entertain our friends with these *bêtises*."

"*Bêtises*!" cried the director, "it is not *bêtise*, it is philologie. You should, sar," again addressing Courtney, "be of a *verri distingué* family. Only the great chiefs have the names according to the physique. To be a '*De*' is nothin', and any one little seigneur is a '*De*'—but a Courtnez, ah, that is grand!"

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Tom, laughing; but at the same time rubbing his nose as if to assure himself that this organ was not unduly limited in dimensions. "And my friend here, Lamallam, what is he?"

"Ah, that I know nothing," rejoined the director, shaking his head suspiciously; "that is not French, that is not English, that is not Dutch—perhaps it is Hindostanee."

Tom Courtney gave me a nudge.

"Our friend is a conjuror," he murmured.

He seemed quite fascinated with the director; we should have dubbed him professor, but that is a title which does not assume large proportions in France—any little boy's tutor is a professor. Well, Tom

was so fascinated with the director, jointly, perhaps, with the director's wife, that he persisted in counter-ordering our carriage for the seven leagues, and in staying to breakfast at the hotel with our new friends. The director made a glorious breakfast, talking all the while, in a running commentary on the viands before us; he sketched the natural history of the lobster, showed us the connecting link between the shrimp and the spider, gave us a brief account of the process of making cream in Normandy, apropos of the sauce à la crème. Only as there were thirty or forty more of his compatriots at table all talking and gesticulating at high pressure, with the incessant rattle of plates and dishes all mingling in one mighty roar, it happened that not all his instructive remarks reached our ears. Madame la Directrice too seemed to enjoy her breakfast. She had the satisfaction of feeling that she was the best-looking and the best-dressed woman at the table. The wife of the "port admiral," as we dubbed the officer who had the most gold lace about his coat, grew pale with envy and jealousy at the sight of her rival's fresh Parisian toilet; while the officers with one accord pronounced the new comer as of all things the most "*chic*." And, by the way, the gallant officers themselves were a puzzle and wonder to us strangers. What were all these captains and lieutenants doing, and the brisk and smart seamen, too, who thronged the streets, while all the time there was not a single ship in a condition to go to sea. But then that was explained by the presence of naval barracks, where men are trained in seamanship without the disagreeable necessity of going afloat. An excellent notion this last, said the director sympathetically, for he hated the sea himself—except from the shore; while madame, on the contrary—The director gave a shrug expressive of the sacrifices he was making for the pleasures of his fair and amiable partner, and to accomplish his mission for his very good friend Chancellor.

All this would have been amusing enough if I had not been so anxious to get sight of Hilda once more. But then, as Courtney urged, of what use was it to start on a vague uncertain chase, when in the course of twenty-four hours or so we should be sure to meet on board the Sea Mew? And in the meantime our director had us in his power. He was not an exacting taskmaster; he allowed us plenty of opportunities for rest and refreshment,

and for enjoying the society of his lively and charming wife. But in the meantime the programme must be carried out. In us he beheld the representatives of the passengers of the Sea Mew, and in our persons must his vows to his friend Chancellor be accomplished. And so, breakfast once over, a carriage was ordered, and we were driven off along the coast towards Cape La Hague.

"I am going to show you," began our director, "the earliest stronghold of your race in Normandy—the first settlement, probably, of the barbarous Scandinavians on the shores of civilised Neustria."

As we started, the weather was rather threatening, great banks of clouds drifting up from the sea, with occasional driving showers; but in spite of the weather, when we reached the little bay called the Anse St. Anne—where there is a little fishing village under the protection of the big fort that crowns the point—in spite of the weather, I say, the whole of the male population of the village was on the move. Their fishing-boats were anchored a little way out at sea—short bluff craft bobbing up and down on the swell like so many fishing-floats; and each man as he left his hut to start with the tide for the fishing-banks carried on his back a sort of coracle, rudely constructed, and of the frailest materials—an egg-box in one case—a little wooden scoop, in fact, which the fisherman dexterously set afloat and scrambled into, and then paddled out to his boat. A primitive race these fishermen, among whom still linger many of the superstitions that once were universal in the district. There is "le moine de Saire," for instance, the evil genius of these parts and the terror of seamen. In the roadstead of Cherbourg he calls out, "Sauvez la vie!" and draws the seamen who come to his help into the waves. Upon the rocks, he cries, "Par ici! par là!" in order to mislead them; and these are evil pranks in which he indulges to this day. But he no longer sits upon the Bridge of Saire to play at cards with the belated traveller and to throw the player into the water as the penalty for losing the game. People had long been too wide-awake for him, and when the railway was made he abandoned the bridge in disgust.

Madame la Directrice is well versed in all this folk-lore, and she can tell us of the goblins that haunt the coasts hereabouts,

which the country people call huardes, or hurleurs; and of Chicheface or, more correctly, Chichevache, a fantastic beast who devours good wives. Her lamentable thinness—for Chichevache, is evidently, being interpreted, "miserable cow"—anyhow, the lamentable thinness of this beast is evidence of the scarcity of that particular article of diet. Another monster, called Bigorne, eats up husbands who are under the dominion of their wives, and his circumstances seem to be more comfortable. Our fair friend is delighted to find that the same monsters were known in England, as witness Chaucer, who warns ladies to avoid the example of patient Griselda, "Lest Chichevache you swowle in her entraile," and Lydgate, who, as Professor Morley shows us, devotes a whole poem to the two mythic beasts.

By this time we have reached Beaumont Hague on the western side of the peninsula, with a lonely château in a wood, close by which our director points out with triumph a raised embankment of green-sward, which he assures us is the Hague Dyke, an entrenchment that cuts off the whole neck of land ending in Cape La Hague; a work that some ascribe to the first Norman settlers in the land, who here may have formed a stronghold and place of retreat, whence they might sally out to plunder and devastate at will. Eight villages are cut off from the rest of the department by this entrenchment, villages which contain a population more purely Scandinavian perhaps than any other part of France—a people tall and strong, with fair-haired women of full and bountiful forms, a people whose mouths have hardly adapted themselves in all these centuries to the tripping language of the French, so that in the neighbourhood the district is sometimes known as the Pays de Chenna, from the peculiar way in which the French "cela" is pronounced. It is a little England, indeed, beyond the silver streak, and Tom Courtney feels a wild desire to embrace some of these tall, good-looking girls, and exclaim: "We are brethren and sisters!" But it is hardly likely that the claim to relationship will be welcomed and acknowledged, for, sooth to say, the English are not over-popular in Normandy—especially unpopular, too, among the seafaring population, a little envious of our flag that, as far as commerce goes, has almost driven theirs from the seas.

And so we take leave of La Hague. Hague, as our director points out, in the

sense of an enclosed space—rapidly running over the words belonging to the same root—"haie," "hedge," "ha-ha," and even "hay"—and we drive off, accompanied by a sharp rattling shower of rain and an equally heavy shower of philologic lore from our director, Tom remarking that all this learning acted upon him in the same way as a sermon, and gave him a wonderful appetite for dinner.

When we reached the town we found despatches waiting for us, which gave us a fresh object in life. First of all was a letter from Hilda brought by a servant in a wonderful shiny hat, driving a dog-cart, with a fine fast-trotting mare. And this proved to be from Hilda for Tom, with a short account of her adventures. They had found the château of the Count de St. Pol, only to learn that the old squire's friend was dead, and that his son ruled in his stead—a young man, handsome, brilliant, and very rich. He had welcomed them with all the effusion of his race; but as he kept up only a bachelor establishment, Hilda and her father had taken up their quarters at the hotel at Valognes—"a dear old place, which you must come and see, Tom." Another despatch too—by telegraph this one—came from the Sea Mew, dated Ryde. She had run across to pick up her owner, who was going to join her there, and back to the coast of France—port of rendezvous, St. Vaast.

We sent for the railway "Indicateur." Last train to Valognes at a quarter past six. Dinner must be postponed till we reach that place. Tom grumbled and muttered something about never travelling with people who were running after girls.

The same question presented itself both to Tom and myself on reading these despatches. Had the recall of the Sea Mew to pick up its owner anything to do with Hilda's hasty departure from the yacht with her father? Was it possible that she shrank from the assiduous attentions of her betrothed, wished to put off their meeting as long as possible? Perhaps it was rather a high-handed proceeding which a girl of spirit might resent, this ordering back the whole party to meet its host—a thing not chivalrous at all, but rather savouring of the self-importance of an arrogant man. However that might be, Tom reminded me that hitherto Hilda had not shown any repugnance to Mr. Chancellor, and that having made up her mind to accept him she must have been prepared for a certain high-handedness which was

part of his character. And, again, Chancellor's visit to France was in pursuance of a scheme of direct advantage for the Chudleigh family. For the son of the house, Redmond, the ex-guardsman and roué, was now, Tom informed me, lying hidden in some French town, mixed up in certain questionable bill transactions, upon which his creditors had threatened criminal proceedings, and Chancellor had undertaken to negotiate matters, hoping to avert any exposure, and to ship off Master Redmond to some obscure colony—say as governor or commander-in-chief. Now, undoubtedly, John Chancellor was very much in love, and it would be a bitter disappointment to him to find that Hilda was not on board to meet him. And why should she have inflicted this disappointment on one who was doing his best to serve her?

Tom and I talked the matter over as we waited for the time of departure, winding round and round the subject without coming to any conclusion. But while we sat in the shade in the courtyard of the hotel, smoking and talking over our woes, the director being busy with a note-book and his programme, and his wife having gone to array herself for a walk, a young and bright-looking girl approached, and in pretty broken English requested our advice and aid. She was Justine, the *femme de chambre* of the English *mademoiselle*, and her mistress had left her here with her boxes, promising to send for her when the destination of the party was settled; but she had heard nothing, and was so dull and desolate in this place that existence was no longer endurable. If we would help her to find her mistress, we should earn her prayers for our welfare and her everlasting gratitude.

"If I could travel with a *femme de chambre*, how gladly would I," exclaimed Tom. "But as that would not be thought correct, I don't see what can be done. But don't cry, my child," seeing that the girl's eyes were fast filling with tears. "You may rely upon us to see you all right." And here it occurred to us that Justine might attach herself to Madame la Directrice, who was travelling without a maid; we were all sure to meet on board the Sea Mew, and in the meantime Justine could make herself useful to her compatriots. Justine eagerly seized the opportunity—an orderly little creature, a satellite who felt herself lost without a central planet—and presently we saw and heard her in full career of

activity, darting here and there for things for madame, and singing:

"A Saint Malo sont arrivés,
Sur le bord de la rivière,
Trois balemens chargés de blés,
Sur l'i sur l'o sur le bord de l'eau,
Dans l'eau,
Sur le bord de la rivière."

"A nice little girl that," quoth Tom, rising and throwing away the end of his cigar; "I mean to have a talk to her, and find out what's the matter with Hilda." Tom must have found an opportunity for carrying out his purpose, for presently he reappeared, and seated himself beside me. "A clever little thing, too, that girl," he began; "she put me up to the situation in a moment. Her mistress, she said, was quite satisfied and happy—at least, if not quite happy, anyhow quite content, till last night when the post came in with two dépêches for mademoiselle, one, no doubt, from her fiancé, which she read quite calmly, half smiling to herself, and the second—ah, the second—which she opened quite indifferently. It was only from the vieille châtelaine at the château of monsieur, her papa. "Yes, the second," went on Tom, imitating the little femme de chambre's gestures, and waving of hands; "the second produced a most lamentable effect on mademoiselle. She turned pale, was about to faint, and then gave way to an indescribable agitation, wringing her hands, and even weeping, in a way à navrer le cœur. Now, what's navrer le cœur?" asked Tom, interrupting his narrative. "I want to get up all those little phrases; they are so useful in travelling. Navrer le cœur, what does it mean, now?"

"Perhaps you'll know before you are much older," I replied gloomily, for, indeed, the little story I had just heard had made me feel something of a heart-break. The "vieille châtelaine" could be no other than Mrs. Murch, and the news that had so much affected Hilda could hardly be other than an account of my visit to Combe Chudleigh, and of what I had said and done. But that Hilda felt that I had come too late, and that we were hopelessly and irrevocably parted, was only too plain from the manner in which she had received the news. Not a gleam of joy or of hope, but only the grief and sorrow with which she took leave for ever of all the sweet promise of earlier days.

But if I could only see her—speak to her in my own name, urge my own rights of first and only love. I became in a moment feverishly anxious to depart.

To a man anxious to get away, it was rather vexing, that as Tom and I were settling our bills we should be seized upon by the director. "Are we to travel on to-night then, my friends?" And then I suggested that as we were going to a small town of limited resources, that his wife and he would be much more comfortable in their present quarters. "Not at all, my friends," rejoined the director; "no trifling considerations of comfort shall interfere with my devotion to the friends of my excellent Chancelleur. Till we are on board that ship with the extraordinary name, I will not lose sight of you, my friends, for a moment. You, my brave Courtnez, conduct my wife to the omnibus, and we others will follow on foot."

And I presently beheld Tom pleasantly sandwiched between Justine and her mistress, while the director held me by the arm as he discoursed upon the origin of the name of Cherbourg, whether *Cæsarburgh*, as some pretend, a derivation the director was inclined to scout, or more probably after some Saxon chieftain *Cyric* or *Cedric*.

But soon we were speeding, at the deliberate speed of a French express train, along a pleasant English-looking valley, with a stream showing here and there a gleam of light, and snug villas perched among the trees; through a woodland-country, the trees all aglow with the rays of the declining sun, with little fields between, shining in vivid green; the storm all cleared away, and the day finishing in peace and splendour; then among roses which cluster about every cottage, hang about the station-walls, and clamber around the wheels of old deserted luggage-trucks—a land of roses and rich meadows, with green hedges and happy, comfortable-looking cows standing to be milked, and milked into vases of polished brass of quite noble classic form: a country of village spires and thatched roofs, with a pretty bit of river here and there shining from under a bridge. It is the river Douve—a less brawling stream than our English Dove, but with a charm of its own, in its rich and pleasant valley. And yonder on the hill our director points out a spire among the trees, which should be a place of pilgrimage for the Scots. It is Brix, the original home of the Bruces before they knew either Northumbria or Scotland. And then we are left at Valognes, while the train speeds on into the green, smiling country.

The inevitable little omnibus waiting at the station is already nearly filled with *commis-voyageurs*, and there is only room for Justine and the boxes, which are packed outside, so we walk down into the quiet town where the shadows are creeping up the walls while the tall roofs of the big châteaux are still in full sunshine. A pleasant social life they must have led these provincial seigneurs before the Revolution, shut out from most of the cares of the world behind these big florid gateways within the shaded courtyards, and the gardens full of sunshine. The gardens are still there, with their pear-trees loaded with fruit trained in formal neatness over the espaliers, with the apple-trees and plum-trees, that may have been grafted by the dainty hands of dukes and marquises of the ancien régime; and the courtyards are still there and the florid gateways, these last with a narrow doorway, perhaps, cut out of the great expanse, and a little grating whence some white-coifed sister may look out upon the world outside, as quiet almost as the cloistered world within. These big houses of the old noblesse are nearly all convents now, or seminaries, or retreats. Except that in one or two of them, perhaps, some honest bourgeois lives, like a mouse in the corner of a granary, in a room or two cut off from the grand salon, with the legs of a fat carved cupid on one side of the partition, and his torso on the other; while the carved mantelpiece holds the dish for tobacco and the modest pipe of the propriétaire. He will replace the purchase-money in a few years with the produce of the grand garden, that seems continually soaked in sunshine all through the long summer days. But of the courtly old families who lived here through so many centuries in their homely state, what trace is there now? Who knows or cares whether our friend De St. Pol, for instance, is the offshoot of some almost royal line, or the son of some speculator or contractor, who the other day might have carried a pedlar's basket?

In a wide grass-covered Place we come to a halt—the Place surrounded by formal rows of well-clipped limes, with seats under the trees, but not a soul to be seen, and the silence only broken by the ringing of the big solemn bells of the church, whose graceful dome and quaint spire crown the house-tops, and the tinkling of little bells of convents from anywhere among the trees. Hereabouts was the keep of the old citadel, that stood out against Kings

of England and Kings of France in turn, with hardly a stone left upon another now to tell the tale, but where the turf gives back a solemn echo from the cells and dungeons below.

Our director leads the way across the grassy Place, and enters the *porte-cochère* of a rambling old hotel. A couple of old-fashioned diligences block the view of the entrance, and sundry waggons piled high with hay. A girl is driving some turkeys into a dilapidated stable, and cocks and hens are marching to roost in a long procession. But by the doorway, in a little nook shaded with shrubs and creepers, there is a group of which I recognise the principal members—the old squire, regarding the scene with dignified complaisance, while at a table sits Hilda, sketching the old gateway, the tower, with its conical roof just touched by golden sunlight, the shadows that hang about the mullioned windows. The grey time-worn front of the church behind is still bathed in light; there is a solemn kind of pathos about this last little bit still left of the old castle of Valognes.

"But, mademoiselle, you have succeeded admirably," cried an enthusiastic voice from the group. "You have expressed the very sentiment of the scene, and in such a charming manner that I shall treasure this sketch as one of my most precious possessions."

The speaker was a young handsome fellow, small and slight, but well-built, who hung over Hilda as she worked with quite unnecessary solicitude.

"But he is charming, that young man," said Madame la Directrice to her husband sotto voce. "Do you happen to know him, mon ami?"

"Know him?—yes," exclaimed the director. "This is one of the best of my friends—the young M. de St. Pol."

LETTERS TO A COUNTRY DOCTOR.

FOR the last three or four years I have been making a collection of the curious or quaint letters sent to me by my poorer patients, and though, from the nature of the contents, I cannot make public all that is written, I will, with your permission, give some extracts from them, which will tend to afford some information as to the orthography and modes of expression in common use by some of the rural inhabitants of Hertfordshire. The extracts are copied

literally from the originals, and are absolutely correct, except as regards the names, which are, for obvious reasons, disguised.

The knowledge of anatomy exhibited in the following is very poor.

"My cough is som beter, but when i cough it causes awful pain on the left side of the stomock below the hip. i have aploide a letseed poultes."

A deeper insight into anatomical details is shown by the person who wrote:

"I feel very full at the chest where the digestive organs lie, especially after meals."

Another writes most emphatically: "if you ples sir would you be so kind has to send me hay bottel of meadson, for hi have got such hay pain hay cross my stickamat."

The next extract is very quaint.

"To Mr. Blank, Surgent. ples sir i write beeing unable to come myslef feeling so tirde and ill. i cannot rest anywere such coffeing and soreiness and benumfells and trembleing with much weeking."

The patient evidently meant to say that she had feelings of numbness with much weakness. More explicit was the poor woman who wrote:

"I have such bad crying stericks wich causes me such pains in my chest and heart makes me feel very weak."

The next example shows that the person who wrote it had conquered the difficulties of orthography, but had a very confused idea of the use of the pronouns.

"Mrs. Johnson's head is a little better; when I put my arm out straight there is such a tingling in my thumb, but her medicine makes me feel sick."

A poor man came to the surgery one day, and, fearing he would be unable to see me personally to explain his symptoms, had written the following letter which he handed to me, as I happened to be disengaged:

"Sir you gave me a bottle of medecine about tree weeks ago for my cold at the chest and the small of the back. My cold was begingeing to come out of me nicely, but I could not see you the next time. I feel a little stuff up at the chest as if a little flem wants loseing; sir, my kind thanks to you for a nother bottle."

The following patient had evidently tried to cure himself before applying to his medical man; he writes:

"Will you be kind enough to send me something to ease a very sad pain in my inside, for I have beign suffering since yiesterday at noon. I have had brandy and wiskey and several things but nothing dont give me any relefe."

The latter part of the next letter reminds one of the famous lines in Macbeth: "If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly."

"Mrs. Stone wanted your opinion as to whether anything could be done for him by sending him away anywhere, she would be glad if anything could be done, to have it done, if you thought it could be done."

Very affecting is the following epistle, received from a poor woman whose husband was in extremis:

"SIR,—My poor dear husband is so much worse, his poor harm is in such dreadful pain and so swollen. Coud you doo anything to ease him, and his tongue is coated dreadful, and I cannot get any food down him. I am broke for Linement and medeson, do cindly come as soon as posable from yours Respectfully.

"J. WATERS."

As is also the following: "He was taken with a sinking and guddy feel, and we thought he would of died for a hour or two."

It is very gratifying to a medical man to hear that a patient is better, and that he attributes the good result to his doctor's skill, hence I transcribe the following:

"If you please would be so kind as to send me some more medsin, as the other suit me so will, and my coft is a little better, but I have the retmatic so bad in my head."

Another grateful patient—a poor working man—writes a most genuine and touching letter.

"I have got my little girl to write me a few lines to you, to tell you I am very much obliged to you for what you have done for me . . . and now I must conclude with kind love to you, yours affectionate,

"AMOS BAKER."

The word medicine seems a puzzler to many poor people, and it is spelt very variously in my correspondence, e.g., meddeson, medesin, meaddsen, medeson, medsin, medsen, medinse, medecian, medecin, medecine, meadson. Some get over the difficulty by asking for something, somethink, or somethind for their ailments. The word appetite is rarely attempted, but when it is it involves a complete failure, as in the ensuing letter:

"Pleas to send me som moor medecin. I ham geting better, but my Back his very weark and Hapytite very bad."

As specimens of quaint spelling the two following extracts are amusing:

"Sir pleas Will you Be so Koind As to

seand Me A Bottoll of Meaddsen, the Bottoll Was left yeastaday."

"Sir I should bee verey much a blige to you if you could come and see My husbon at wonce for i should like to have your advice for his head is so verey bad and he swlen so as he cannot see out of one of eye."

Almost as interesting is this extract :

"My back was taken bad a week ago I had a Plaster from the Cemist that don't seem to do me any good I have got it on know. I Was took on yesterday morning when i begun to work that's like a snap come the bottom my back I fell down and that took the use away from me for some minutes."

I could give many more extracts, but I fear I shall tire my readers, and, therefore, will only quote a remark made by a recently made widow. When I asked her how her husband died, she replied, "He went off as easy as a glove."

In conclusion, I will refer to a few of the strange terminations to the letters I have had. One person signs herself "yours respectively," another "I remain with your assistance," another "your amble servant," another "your afflicted and poor servant," and another "yours respetfully."

AN ALIBI AND ITS PRICE.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

BY THEO GIFT.

CHAPTER III.

THERE are "mauvais quarts d'heures" in all lives, and it was a specially "mauvais quart d'heure" which began for Hetty Mavors about this time. In the first place, the vicar ceased to come to the house at all, so that she had no explanation either of his words in the drawing-room that day, or of his strangely altered demeanour so shortly afterwards. In the next, the breach between her and Mrs. Pentreath would not heal. It should have done so, seeing that Hetty was even nervously anxious to keep within the limits assigned to her when once she was aware of them, and that Mrs. Pentreath, having said her say, and being conscious that she had said it over harshly, was disposed to let the matter drop, and trust to the good principles of her young companion for there being no necessity for its renewal. But unless one is very great or very humble it is difficult to go back from a position one has once assumed. Mrs. Pentreath was too

proud to weaken the force of her rebuke by owning it had been too severe; and Hetty had been too much wounded by her patroness's injustice to make any advances on her own part. So a certain constraint and coldness sprang up between these two ladies who had been so fond of one another; and the younger suffered most from it, seeing that the other had her son to fall back upon, while she had—nobody!

Certainly no one could accuse Hetty of seeking consolation from Captain Pentreath, or of "running after" that young officer any more. On the contrary, she avoided him as much as possible, left off chatting with him or volunteering any of those little friendly offices and errands which she had taken on herself in all innocence for his service, kept as much as possible at her guardian's side when he was present, and even substituted a huge and interminable piece of embroidery in place of the songs and duets with which she and the young officer had been wont to make the evenings tuneful. She only went to the piano now when his mother asked her; never otherwise.

It was excellently meant, but it was overdone, as such efforts are apt to be, and not from any wilfulness on Hetty's part, but simply from girlish simplicity and ignorance. Mrs. Pentreath, of course, could have done it much better in her young days, and could have retired from a flirtation with as much grace as she had shown in entering on it; but then Mrs. Pentreath had been a little woman of the world from her very cradle, and forgetting that Hetty was the very reverse, she felt almost angry with the girl at times for her awkwardness and consciousness; and even wondered whether this exaggerated coldness and distance was but a blind to conceal a more clandestine intimacy between the young people than had previously existed.

In truth, however, poor Hetty had a very difficult part to play, and the person who was the cause of her having to play it was the very one to make it more difficult still to her. From a sense of delicacy for which Mrs. Pentreath did not give her credit, she had sturdily refused to give the young officer any explanation of her change of conduct; but Captain Pentreath was not to be blinded. Even if his mother had not given him more than one hint that his attentions to her young companion were displeasing to her, his own vanity would have forbidden him to believe that any girl could voluntarily withdraw herself

from them; and, therefore, while preserving a certain amount of caution before "the old lady," he chose to assume that Hetty and he were fellow-victims to her tyranny, and to embarrass the girl unspeakably by a system of sighs and glances, whispered words, and covert expressions of sympathy, which, if not actual love-making, were sufficiently like it to make the poor child desperately uncomfortable.

If she had only known how to rebuff him, and in such manner that she might not seem to attach more meaning to his conduct than he intended to express by it! But, alas! it was just this that seemed impossible to her. These things which appear so easy to us in after-life, are often very Juggernauts in the path of youth; and of all difficult things to refuse a man before he has offered to her is the most difficult to a young and modest girl; more especially when, as in this case, the man has no intention of offering himself; and, in the desire to enjoy what is to him a very pretty flirtation with a very pretty girl, keeps carefully on the safe side of any expression of which she could take hold.

Hetty could have cried at times for a friend to confide in and ask assistance from in her difficulties; but Mrs. Pentreath, who might have been such a one in the past, was of course the last person to whom she could appeal at present, and as for that other, he never came near her now. Since the day of that passionate interview in the parlour when he had said so much and yet so little, she had not once spoken to him; and the poor child grew pale and wistful-looking in the loneliness to which this falling away of her old allies seemed to have finally condemned her.

Captain Pentreath, too, was beginning to get tired of her persistent shyness and avoidance, and took advantage of her wan looks to introduce a little plan of his own for breaking them down.

There was, as I think I have said, an eight o'clock service at St. Gudule's on weekdays. Hetty had been in the habit of attending it in all weathers, her little feet tripping to church as briskly through the winter snow as over the summer grass; and Mrs. Pentreath approved of the practice. She thought it well for young girls to be religious in their habits, and said so. But one day it came to her knowledge that Ernest had begun to accompany Miss Mavors on these early excursions, and forthwith the latter found her church-going

at an end. She had no idea of the real reason of its prohibition, or that it had, in fact, been the means of first opening Mrs. Pentreath's eyes to the idea that her son might be finding the girl more attractive than was desirable. She never said so, of course; she had far too much tact and breeding to suggest such an idea; but it was put to Hetty that when there was a third person in the house it would be a convenience to her patroness to have her at home in the morning; and the girl complied immediately and as a matter of course. Equally as a matter of course Captain Pentreath confirmed his mother in her suspicions by discontinuing his church-going when she did, and there the matter rested greatly to Hetty's regret, and not a little to that of the vicar, who missed her sweet face from its accustomed corner in the church, and guessed quite wrongly as to the reason why.

But one day Hetty found the embargo taken off as quietly as it had been put on.

Captain Pentreath had been grumbling at breakfast at being awakened in the morning by the eight o'clock bell from St. Gudule's.

"What did Hamilton mean," he asked impatiently, "by ringing a beastly bell at that hour in November, when people in their senses would never dream of getting up to wade through fog and mud to a dreary service? For his part, as there wasn't any sun in England to warm the air in winter, he required to stay in bed till the fires had had time to do it instead; and if Hamilton could find anyone idiotic enough to prefer going to his old church instead, his victims oughtn't to want a bell to call them to the torture."

"Fie, Ernest, for shame! I believe George has a very fair congregation, and I am sure the bell never disturbs me," said Mrs. Pentreath in the indulgent way in which she always rebuked her son; but about an hour later, when Hetty and she were alone, she said to the girl:

"I don't think you are as rosy as you used to be, Hetty. You used to have such a good colour every day last winter when you came in to breakfast from the early service. I'm afraid it's too cold for you to go at present; but if not, and if you like it, I have nothing particular for you to do, you know, my dear, which need keep you at home."

Hetty's face went rosy enough on the instant to satisfy anyone.

"Too cold!" she repeated almost in-

dignantly; "it was never too cold for her to go, and there was nothing she liked better."

Her eyes quite shone with gladness at the thought of the permitted pleasure, and she thanked Mrs. Pentreath so eagerly that the elder lady almost began to question the wisdom of her concession, and to wonder if she had unwittingly played into the hands of two young people who cared so much for each other's society as to stoop to scheme for it.

Perhaps as regarded one of them she was not very far out.

Captain Pentreath had no opportunity of seeing Hetty alone during the day; but when he came down dressed for dinner in the evening he found her in the drawing-room before him. She was standing on the rug before the fireplace, stretching out her hands to the blaze to warm them. No one else was there. Even the gas was not yet turned up; and as the firelight leaping up cast a warm glow over the soft, semi-transparent folds of her simple frock of Madras muslin, touched to a deeper crimson the knots of ruby-coloured ribbon at her breast and elbows, and flushing her sweet face with rosy warmth, fell back, leaving a brighter sparkle in the bright dark eyes which turned enquiringly to the door, Ernest thought he had never seen her look so young, and fair, and winsome. His own eyes kindled with genuine admiration, and as he came towards her he exclaimed:

"What a radiant vision for a weary man's eyes! I only wish it were Christmas, and that there was mistletoe about! But it is cruel of you to look so blooming to-night, Hetty, when only yesterday I was impressing on my mother how awfully ill every one thought you were looking. Did she say anything to you about it, and about taking more exercise? I went so far as to suggest that was what you wanted."

"I, ill! No. What do you mean? Mrs. Pentreath said nothing to me," answered Hetty, blushing rather from embarrassment than pleasure at his compliments; "except," she added immediately, "that she said I might go to the early service again; but——"

Captain Pentreath burst out laughing.

"She did! Brava, mother! I didn't think you would swallow my matutinal hook so easily, or that I had baited it with the right worm for you. To think that she did stop your going just because she found out I was accompanying you! I wonder now who told her."

"Captain Pentreath, she never did. What makes you fancy such a thing?" cried Hetty, shocked and crimsoning; but she was silenced.

"What? Why the fact that I am not a fool. You heard what I said this morning about my weakness for late rising in winter. What do you think when you see the way in which she acts on it and before the day is out? I saw through it from the first; but it wasn't worth while saying anything while we could get our walks (what happy ones we have had, Hetty!) at other times; but now pray, pray——"

What Captain Pentreath was praying for, however, remained unknown; for at that moment the door opened, and before Hetty, in her confusion and indignation, could even open her lips to remonstrate, they were sealed by the appearance of Mrs. Pentreath, who entered the room ruffling the train of her long black silk dress behind her; and taking in with a calmly critical glance, which embraced and measured both together, the startled attitude of the girl with her hot, flushed face and sparkling eyes, and Captain Pentreath's elaborate absorption in the newspaper, behind which he was almost hidden as he reclined in the armchair into which he had hastily flung himself.

Not one word of comment did she utter; but there was something in that keen, momentary glance and in the set of her lips and eyebrows which spoke more eloquently than a lengthy speech to Hetty's aroused sensitiveness, and in one second confirmed the truth of Captain Pentreath's revelation as to the cause of the abrogation and re-granting of her liberty.

The girl's whole soul was in a tumult of disgust, wounded feeling, and impatience. There is always something intensely galling to a frank, high-spirited nature to find that it has been mistrusted and suspected at a time when it is conscious of nothing but the truest and most innocent intentions; and the idea that Mrs. Pentreath had been silently disapproving of and guarding against her so far back as those summer months when she (Hetty) thought that there was nothing but love and confidence between them stung and mortified her to a degree which almost made her forget her previous annoyance at Captain Pentreath's sympathetic confidences, which, from the clandestine way in which they were bestowed on her, she was beginning to feel both disagreeable and compromising.

But by morning time all these shadows had happily disappeared. In middle age, indeed, we take our cares to bed with us, turn them over with our pillows, and wake from restless slumbers to find them couched at our side and looking bigger and more ghastly in the morning light. But youth has a blessed facility for letting things unpleasant slip lightly by, and burying the day's troubles in the night's sleep; so when Hetty woke next morning it was to nothing but a sense of pleasure in resuming the habit which had begun by being a duty and had become one of the chief sources of happiness in the day.

To be sure, one little twinge of conscience did trouble her, suggested by the query as to whether it was only the quiet morning service which seemed so attractive to her, or whether, in looking forward to it, she was not also craving for a sight of the friend whose counsels in and out of his sacred office she had so sorely missed; but even if Hetty had been more of the modern introspective character than she was, she could hardly have regarded this little weakness as a deadly sin. Of course, regarded impartially, the Rev. George Hamilton was only a man like his cousin Ernest Pentreath; but women have a way of their own for discriminating on these things, and to Hetty he was quite unlike any other man, Captain Pentreath least of all. Besides, it was only in his ministerial character that she was looking forward to seeing him. It was not likely that he would even notice her presence in the church, so little had he seemed to miss it.

So Hetty thought, and yet, just as she was leaving church after the brief service, and hesitating a second before facing a small cold rain which had just begun to speckle the grey stones, and add a raw dampness to the chill of the November air, a voice behind her said:

"Have you no umbrella? Surely you didn't come out without one in this weather?"

Hetty turned round, her whole face one flush of shy startled joy which a man must have been blind indeed not to read and feel flattered by; yet her answer was tame and commonplace enough:

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Hamilton, I forgot it; but it doesn't matter. I don't mind a little rain."

"You may learn to do so if you go out in it unnecessarily, and before breakfast too. Nothing is so foolish."

But though the vicar tried to speak coldly, it was a difficult task with that lovely wistful face looking upwards into his; and then Hetty had given him her hand, and there was something in the soft clinging touch of the little fingers which melted him still more. He could not help adding:

"I thought you had given up coming to the weekday service altogether. You have not done so for a long time."

"No," said Hetty. How glad she was he had given her an opportunity of explaining, and yet she blushed dreadfully over the process. "I could not help it. Mrs. Pentreath kept me at home. She said she wanted me of a morning."

"Mrs. Pentreath!" repeated the vicar sceptically, but indeed, Hetty's blushes were misleading. "I thought she never got up till after you got back; but I don't at all doubt"—this very coldly—"that you were wanted, and I did not mean to reproach you."

"Ah, but I was not wanted really," with a quickness born of the chill distrust in Mr. Hamilton's tone. That he should suspect her was too much. "Mrs. Pentreath said so, but it was—I don't mind telling you, because you know all about it already—because of her son. He came with me three or four times—do you remember?—and when she found it out she stopped my coming. I was very, very sorry, but I could not help it."

"And Ernest was sorry too, I dare say," said the vicar, "but, after all, as he can see plenty of you at home, he ought to have been content with that."

"His contentment had nothing to do with it," said Hetty warmly. "I did not come to church for him, as Mrs. Pentreath might have known."

"But he came to church for you, as she also knew, by his staying away directly you did. I don't think she should have interfered with your liberty in consequence; but considering her views on certain subjects you can hardly blame her for doing so. Many mothers would have done the same."

"And you think I should have said nothing about it? You would have liked me to stay away from church of my own accord if Captain Pentreath chose to go with me? I did not expect you to say that," cried Hetty, much hurt, and with moistening eyes. But George Hamilton was not looking at them, and his voice sounded harder than ever.

"Nor do I say it. I should be very sorry to offer any opinion as to the relations between you and my cousin. They have nothing to do with me, as I told you on the one occasion on which we spoke of them."

"And I told you then that there were no relations between us—absolutely none," cried Hetty more hotly than before. "He began by being kind and friendly to me, and I used to talk and laugh with him. I liked him. I don't mind saying so; but that was all, every bit of it; and since Mrs. Pentreath was vexed by it, even that is at an end. He would like to be kinder still to me, I believe, but I will not let him. I never walk with him. I hardly ever speak to him. I keep out of his way. I am rude—positively rude. Even Mrs. Pentreath acknowledges it, and you—don't you believe it that you look at me so? Is it possible that you disbelieve me, that you think there is anything between us even now?"

"Yes, I do think so. I do disbelieve you. Heaven help me!" cried the vicar harshly. "I would give my right hand not to do so, but how can I avoid it? What can I think of the girl who talks to me like this—the girl whose nature I thought was as pure and spotless as the flowers on the altar within there, and who, nevertheless, I saw with my own eyes, and not an hour after the scene in which she professed so much grief and indignation at her guardian's unjust accusations, walking side by side with the object of those accusations in a lonely lane at sundown; he telling her that he would lay down his life to please her, and she—she assuring him of the happiness his words gave her? There, I did not mean to make you blush, Miss Mayors, and I ought rightly to apologise for having overheard even so much of a tête-à-tête which was not intended for me; but neither of you spoke very low; and as I passed you, coming back from seeing old Betts, along the fields by the towing-path there, I could hardly avoid both seeing and hearing—for a minute."

"The pity was, Mr. Hamilton, that you did not do both for longer," retorted Hetty.

Truly her colour was brilliant, as the vicar said, and she panted a little as she spoke, but her eyes met his dauntlessly, and there was a half angry, half scornful smile on her pretty red lips which made the vicar's heart beat more quickly in

spite of himself. Even a lover's jealousy could not construe the expression into that of a girl convicted in an unseemly love-affair.

"It seems to me," she went on, "that people who overhear things always manage to stop short just when their hearing what is being said would be of any use. I did tell Captain Pentreath that if he was in earnest in what he said it would make me very happy and— What else? Go on, Mr. Hamilton."

"How can I tell what else?" said the vicar, somewhat confused in his turn, but speaking quickly and abruptly as usual, "I am not an eavesdropper or a spy. Do you think I stopped to listen?"

"I wish you had," said Hetty, "for then you would have heard me ask him to go away and leave me. He said he would do anything to please me, and that was the only thing I wanted. I had gone out by myself because my head ached from crying, and I wanted a little fresh air. Captain Pentreath was in town. We had no idea that he was even coming back to dinner, and when he overtook me on the towing-path, and said he had come there to find me, I was so vexed I could have cried. I did all I could to drive him away. I was sulky, almost rude; but he would not go; and then he began to talk nonsense, and I begged him to leave me. He was very unwilling, for of course he knew he had done nothing to vex me, and thought someone had been making mischief between us, and that made him angry and inclined to say foolish things, which he wouldn't have done otherwise. When he saw that I was really in earnest, however, and wanted him to leave me, he did so, and I came home by myself. You know that, for I met you—(how well I remember it!)—and you—cut me! Oh yes, not rudely or vulgarly; you bowed, of course, but you cut me all the same, and you know it. You have been very unjust to me, Mr. Hamilton, as unjust and unkind as Mrs. Pentreath. But after all it does not matter. I have no claim on either of you; and if I have no one else to take care of me, I—I can—can take care of myself quite well."

Now, it is a very good thing for young women to have proud, independent spirits of their own, and to make proud, independent speeches for the destruction and humiliation of other people; but if they want to be taken at their word they should not have tiny round faces which turn from red to white, and pale and quiver like a

baby's at the smallest provocation, nor great liquid brown eyes that flash and sparkle like a little stream under a wintry sun; nor a voice that falters and droops like broken music, and, above all, they must not cry—not if they have bonnet-strings at any rate.

George Hamilton saw one big pearly drop splash down and stain the crimson ribbons tied in a cosy bow under the little round chin of the girl he loved as she stood there, flushed, defiant, and prettier than ever, a slender, fur-clad figure on the cold grey stones under the cold grey sky, and with the leafless elm-boughs tossing over her head; and, despite all his previous convictions, all his efforts at hardening himself against what he considered a weak and hopeless passion, he gave way at once.

"Don't, Hetty, don't say that, my child, my love!" he entreated, taking both her hands, and drawing her almost forcibly within the shelter of the porch which she had quitted. "You have a claim on me, the greatest a woman can have on any man, for I love you. I have loved you ever since you first came here, and it nearly broke my heart to think that I had not only lost you, but that you could deceive me. Dear Hetty, forgive me, be just to me. What else could a jealous man think, knowing how Ernest admired you, and how successful he is with women generally? And, oh, my darling, tell me now, for pity's sake, do you care for him at all, or have I any hope?"

Early service at St. Gudule's began at eight o'clock and lasted about half an hour, so Hetty was usually back long before the lazily-luxurious ten o'clock meal which was called breakfast at Guelder Lodge, and comprised more courses and dainties than often go to a middle-class dinner. On the present occasion she was considerably later than usual, and thought herself still more so when she espied, as she came up the drive, the stately figure of Mrs. Pentreath, who usually was not down till the last moment before breakfast, seated in an armchair before the dining-room window, with her gold-mounted eyeglasses on her nose, and reading her letters with as tranquil an air as though to be up and dressed thus early was quite a normal occurrence with her. Hetty, however, was

quite startled by the sight, and congratulated herself on having forbidden the vicar to come home with her, as, in the joy and content of his unlooked-for happiness, he was exceedingly anxious to do. Nothing, indeed, would he have liked better than to have been allowed to march in to breakfast, with his small sweetheart on his arm, and then and there announce his engagement, and ask his aunt's congratulations—her approval he took as a matter of course—on the same. Unfortunately—very unfortunately, as it happened—however, Hetty would not hear of such a thing. Her guardian's previous suspicions had wounded the child's pride and modesty to the quick, and the mere thought that it might be said that, foiled in securing one lover, she had gone to church to catch another, was enough to send the sensitive blood burning to her cheeks, and though she could not refuse the vicar the few words he asked for, especially when those words were the seal of her happiness as well as his, she was in such a tremble of agitation after she had uttered them, and so eager to escape immediately, that Mr. Hamilton felt it would be cruel and ungenerous to detain her, and consoled himself with the reminder that as it was her visiting day in the district they would be sure to meet in the course of the afternoon, and when she had grown a little calmer and less shy of him in his new capacity.

Of late he had gone out of his way to avoid such meetings, and had succeeded at the cost of as much pain to himself as to his fair young colleague and parishioner; but to-day there would be no more necessity for such self-sacrifice; and when they parted with a long fervent hand-clasp on his side, and one shyly tender glance from Hetty's dark eyes ere she ran across the street and disappeared in the chill November mist, the Rev. George Hamilton was as happy a man as could well be found.

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